



Voice Of The Northwoods

Focused on Excellence—Putting Veterans First



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Focused on Excellence – Putting Veterans First



BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Warm weather is almost here. There is no excuse to avoid inactivity. Some activity is better than none, and adults who participate in any amount of activity gain health benefits. Strive for 2 1/2 hours each week of moderate intensity. For more information and helpful links, click [here](#).

VA HEALTH CARE Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century

OGJVAMC Ethics Program Recognized Nationally

The Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center (OGJVAMC) ranked twelfth in the nation for Ethical Leadership scores on the most recent Integrated Ethics Survey, and its Integrated Ethics (IE) Program was recently recognized nationally as a role model for other VA facilities.

OGJVAMC's IE Program was featured on the front page of *Integrated Ethics in Action*, a national publication from the National Center for Healthcare.

OGJVAMC was highlighted for its success in promoting Integrated Ethics through three leadership initiatives.

Focus on Ethics implemented focused activities on ethical education to promote general awareness of the IE program and educate employees on how to report ethical concerns.

Fresh Eyes Approach was an in depth review of the 14 identified ethical concerns. This was completed by employees outside their service areas to get a completely fresh review of facility processes.

The Best Intentions are Not Always the Right Intentions is currently underway and promotes employee awareness on how to address situations from an ethical perspective and employee Psychological Safety in reporting ethical concerns.

"As a result of these initiatives, employees are asking more ethics related

questions and leadership is eliciting open discussions and sharing their expectations for ethical practice," said Rosemary Romick, CCP, OGJVAMC's IE Program Officer. "We have focused on informing every employee how ethics affects everything they do in their service to Veterans."

OGJVAMC Director, Jim Rice, also noted how ethical leadership decisions have supported the employees in doing the right thing and achieving OGJVAMC's vision, *Focused on Excellent-Putting Veterans First*. "Ethical leadership decisions is a key factor in successfully assimilating VA's five I CARE core values into our everyday work," said Rice. "We stress to our employees to always do the right thing for the Veteran and everything else will take of itself." **(Continued on page 5)**

"Ethics affects everything they [employees] do in their service to Veterans"



During the 2014 National Compliance and Integrated Ethics Week, Dr. Cheryl Griggs (left) and Deb Skoglund-White, RN (right), were awarded the Integrated Ethics Expert and Compliance Awards respectively for their participation in educational activities and demonstration of their knowledge in these areas. With them are Rosemary Romick, IE Program Officer (far left) and VAMC Director Jim Rice.

Who We Serve

Our Veterans and their stories

David Coleman (US Army)

David Coleman was born in Boston and grew up in the state of Maine. His wife, Ann, is a native of Stambaugh, Michigan. David enlisted in the U.S. Air Force three weeks after graduating from high school. He served a total of 24 years; 18 in active service and six in the Air National Guard. Most of his service time was spent in the construction trades, but he also served two stints as a recruiter. In his words, he has “been everywhere” during his years of service.

While serving in Southeast Asia, David contracted Hepatitis C, which can destroy the liver. If the liver is not functioning, ammonia levels rise and can affect a person psychologically, and even result in death.

To understand his story, David says that one must understand Ann’s part in getting him help and being his caregiver. As his ammonia level increased, David began to act strangely. When he took six baths in one afternoon, Ann called a friend. They got him into OGVAMC for help. Her intervention saved him. He was found to be suffering from encephalopathy, a brain dysfunction.

David’s liver had been destroyed, and he needed a transplant. In order to qualify, he was evaluated for many factors, including survivability and

caregiver support after the transplant. At first he did not qualify because Ann, who would be his caregiver, uses a wheelchair. Ann proved herself, and in 2010 David had a successful liver transplant at the VA medical center in Pittsburgh.



Air Force Veteran David Coleman

David said that he could not have gotten through all he has been through without Ann’s help and the help of her son Alan, many doctors, nurses, and others. “I owe a debt to the care I have received at the VA that I can never repay,” said David.

In his past life David did what he *had* to do. After his surgery he now wanted to work at something he *enjoys* doing and that will have a positive impact. He realized that there was no way of thanking each of the many people who helped him, but in some way he wanted to return the good and make a difference.

The VA’s vocational rehabilitation office found he was eligible to return to school. He enrolled in the on-line degree program at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, and majored in social work. He graduated in June 2014, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Leadership. David is looking forward to using his skills and knowledge to help society in payment for all the help others have given him.

In David’s words, “What a liver transplant means to me is that I will now get to see how my grandchildren turn out. I will get to grow old with my wife, and I will get more time to learn and grow and be more appreciative of all the things that surround me, during my second chance.” ♦



David Coleman (center) appearing on the WJNR radio show, Veterans Information Hour, to tell his story of the VA transplant he receive. To his right is Kathy Wahoviak, Transplant Program Coordinator.

OGJVAMC Hosts Veteran Town Halls

Fourteen held in two years

Fifty-two Veterans and family members settled into the bleachers of the Ishpeming National Guard Armory on March 12 and listened to OGJVAMC's director, Mr. Jim Rice, discuss services and benefits of VA health care and more specifically the new VA Choice Card Program. Then it was their turn to ask him questions, provide comments, and air concerns about the care provided by OGJVAMC. This was repeated later in the afternoon at Northern Michigan University where another 25 Veterans and family participated in a Veteran Town Hall.

In the past two years, OGJVAMC has hosted fourteen Veteran Town Halls throughout the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin to inform Veterans and their families of VA services and benefits and to get their feedback on how OGJVAMC can better serve Veterans.

Feedback at the town halls are usually a mix of both compliments, concerns and general questions. At the March 12 town halls, Veterans or their family members raised concerns and questions related to accessing non-VA care if not qualified for the Choice Program; having to travel to Iron Mountain for procedures; VA medications for non-VA procedures, and navigating the VBA

claims process. OGJVAMC staff and VFW VSO, Pat Holcomb, worked one-on-one with individual Veterans after the town halls to help them with their specific medical and benefits issues.

Led by the Mr. Rice, the town halls are a partnership with local Veteran Service Officers and include OGJVAMC staff from the Women Veterans Health, OEF/OIF, Behavioral Health, Peer Support, Non-VA Care Coordination, Choice Program, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Public Affairs. For TV 6's coverage click [here](#) and for TV 3's web article, click [here](#). ♦



Jim Rice, Medical Center Director, answering questions at a recent Veteran Town Hall in Ishpeming, MI.

Manistique Rural Outreach Clinic

Now open four days a week



Manistique VA staff (l-r): Donna Pryor-Foote, MSA; Tonya Bosanic, LPN; Dustin Brewster, RN; Bonnie Koski, DNP (interim provider); Marj Middel, LMSW; Jason Dougherty, LMSW(ERANGE); and Diana Hardy, PA (newly assigned provider). Not pictured: Kerri Unger, LPN; and Jim Foote, LMSW (ERANGE).

The Manistique VA Rural Outreach Clinic has expanded its services to four days per week due to increasing enrollment of Manistique area Veterans. The clinic added Mondays to its operating hours as of March 16.

The clinic has eight staff that provide primary care and mental health services to over 650 Veterans. The clinic is located at 813 East Lakeshore Dr. (US 2) in Manistique, and it is also home to OGJVAMC's E-RANGE Team for the Eastern UP (see story on page 5 of the July 2014 issue [here](#)).



Continuing the Journey Toward Patient-Centered Care

Engaging OGJVAMC Employees - Part 2

Do you know what Patient Centered Care is? It is an approach to health care that prioritizes the Veteran and their values and partners with them to create a personalized strategy to optimize their health and well-being. It is shifting from problem-based disease care to patient-centered health care.

Since December 2013 OGJVAMC has been on a journey to provide *personalized, proactive, patient-centered care*, which is critically important as OGJVAMC strives to be a leader in rural health care and provider of choice for Veterans. The whole journey consists of 9 steps, and we are now on step 8—engaging OGJVAMC staff in working to create a more patient centered environment and learning how each person has an impact on patient centered care.

In the last issue, we highlighted our partnership with the VA Office of Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT) to interview Veterans and stakeholders, engage executive leaders and supervisors, and train fourteen PCC&CT champions.

These champions have since been facilitating day-long PCC&CT staff engagement sessions each month at Bay College to ensure that employees are well-versed in the patient-centered care model. To date nearly 150 OGJVAMC employees have attended a session with very positive reviews: “All employees should attend this”; “It was great to interact with other staff from around the medical center”; “Awesome facilitators”; “Very worthwhile experi-



A large group discussion being led by Steve Eakley (Engineering Service) during the most recent Staff Engagement Session at Bay College. Nearly 150 staff have attended these day long sessions to date, with positive reviews.

ence”; “It was outstanding”; “It causes the employee to think from the Veteran perspective”; “It was very valuable”; “I really enjoyed this workshop”; “Interactive, very open”; and “To have all employees practice what we have learned today will make our facility top-notch.”

The goal over the next year is for all employees to attend these sessions. These sessions focus on looking at VA health care through the patient’s eyes using a mix of large group discussion, moving video presentations, and interactive small group exercises. Individual and small group activities include taking a personal health inventory and brainstorming how employees can help improve the workplace experience, which impacts patient care.

All employees are encouraged to attend this worthwhile experience. To sign up, contact Larry Heers. ♦



OGJVAMC employees participating in one of the small group sessions. Left to right: Dr. Debra Morley (Neurologist, Medicine Service); Selena Okler, RN (Hospice/Palative Care, Community Living Service) and Andy Webber (Non-VA Care Coordination Office). Standing is Steve Eakly, Engineering Service, who is one of the three PCC/CT champions facilitating the training.

Integrated Ethics (cont'd from page 1)

OGJVAMC's Integrated Ethics Program

The VA's IE Program is a comprehensive and integrated approach to ethics in all areas of administrative and clinical operations at VA healthcare facilities.

Integrated Ethics is overseen by the **Ethical Leadership Coordinator** who is the Medical Center Director, Mr. James Rice. Ethical Leadership promotes a healthy environment that not only improves employee morale, it enhances productivity and efficiency. It promotes psychological safety for employees to feel comfortable in reporting ethical concerns.

These concerns are then addressed by the **IE Consultation Committee**, which is chaired by the facility IE Consultation Coordinator, Ms. Patricia Staller, LCSW-ACSW. Their responsibilities are to address consults or issues reported as ethical concerns by patients, employees or visitors. The committee members bring a variety of expertise to address these concerns and assist with corrective recommendations when necessary. If during the review of the IE consult the IE Consultation Committee identifies that it was the result of a practice or process used at OGJVAMC (indicating that the same issue will re-occur if corrective changes are not made) the ethics issue is referred to the **Preventive Ethics (PE) committee** under the oversight of the PE Coordinator, Mr. Joe Hord, HSS to the Associate Director. The PE Committee reviews VHA regulations to propose corrective changes for the identified practices or processes.

The IE Program is managed by the **Integrated Ethics Program Officer**, Ms. Rosemary Romick, CCP Compliance Officer. She is responsible for ensuring all requirements of the IE program are met and that education and information is provided to employees so they are aware of the program and feel comfortable in bringing their ethical issues forward. ♦

65th Anniversary News



The first Veteran was admitted to the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center on March 5, 1950. 65 years later, some things have changed such as transitioning from a hospital with 265 beds and 360 employees to a medical center with 57 beds, outpatient care clinics, and nearly 700 employees (and a name change in 2008 to honor a local WWII Medal of Honor recipient).

The **Sapphire Seas 65th Anniversary Dinner Dance** will take place on Saturday, September 19, 2015 at Pine Grove in Iron Mountain and will feature the band "Next Myle" with our own Kevin Fraker. Save the date, and watch for further announcements coming soon.

Basket Drawings: The gift baskets are on display monthly at the Director's Suite entrance on the 5th floor. See committee members to purchase entries. Baskets are usually drawn on the 3rd Thursday of each month through August 2015. All entries from previous baskets will be entered into a second chance drawing so even if you don't win, you will have a second chance. The second chance prize will be announced and drawn in September 2015.

Logo Sales: T-shirts, lanyards and hats are available for purchase and can be worn on Friday's. See committee members for order forms or watch for them in your all-employee emails



Julia Weiss (3rd from left) receives a certificate and \$50 for her winning entry in the 65th Anniversary Logo Contest. With her are members of the **65th Anniversary Committee** (l-r): Connie Gudowicz, Laura Skrumbellos, Rita Rosen, Patti Menza, and Chris Watts. Committee members not pictured: Erin Hum-pula, Lori Guy, Rob Lundholm, and Cheryl Hamby.

Service Spotlight: Comp & Pen



C & P Service staff include (l-r): Phil Leaf, NP; Jodi Firby, DNP; Judi Bjork, DNP; Jo Ellen Zahn, DNP and Scott Visintainer, C&P Coordinator. C&P staff not pictured: Johanna Zuehls, AuD (Audiology); James Harrison, MD (Surgical Service); Robert Marcellino, PhD (Behavioral Health Service); William Schmitt, PhD (Behavioral Health Service); and Nelson Hassell, OD (Optometry)

Nutrition Tip Of The Month!

Try Gardening

Like the “Victory Gardens” in World War II, many families are gardening again with backyard and patio plantings. In addition to the amazing harvest of fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs, gardeners enjoy health and financial benefits as well. Gardening provides opportunities to walk, bend, stretch, lift, and smile. A report published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine showed regular gardening for those over 60, cut the risk of a heart attack or stroke by 27%. Raised beds and planters can save your joints and extend your years of gardening pleasure. Can a couple of tomato plants save you money? Yes, those two plants can yield 20 pounds of produce. At grocery store prices of \$2.00 a pound, those plants are worth \$40. Try your hand at gardening this spring and claim a ‘victory’ for your health and well-being. ♦



The Compensation and Pension (C&P) department is a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) service in which certified C&P providers conduct disability examinations on veterans or active service members for claimed service connected conditions, at the request of the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA). A disability examination is an assessment of the medical evidence for compensation. This, more often than not, involves conducting an extensive examination and providing an opinion. Disability examinations may also be requested for nonservice connected pensions and for appeals cases.

The process begins with the veteran submitting a claim to the VBA. If the VBA determines examinations and/or opinions are needed to decide the case, they will submit a request to a local VHA facility that provides C&P examinations. The timeline for the facility receiving the request is to have the exam, all testing, consults, and opinions completed and submitted within 30 days of receiving the request. The examinations needed are related to a broad spectrum of conditions and do require consults and collaboration across many disciplines.

The C&P providers conduct Disability Exams for multiple Medical conditions, Mental Health, Audiology, ENT, and Optometry claims. This department works collaboratively with other services including Neurology, Radiology, and Cardiopulmonary clinics to provide additional specialized exams as indicated. Additional services provided in the C&P department are related to Environmental Military Exposures include providing Special Registry Examinations. ♦

Blast from the Past Photo



From the Winter 1994 *Voice of the Northwoods* (yes, the newsletter was called that back then)... So who is this current OGJVAMC employee?

Kathy Wahoviak, Caregiver Support Program Coordinator. Back then she worked on 3 West, and was the September Employee of the Month.

Caught on Camera



On February 6th OGVAMC and CBOC staff wore red to support Healthy Heart Day. Pictured here is the HR Management Service staff. **For more Wear Red Day photos of click [here](#).**



As part of the National Salute to Veterans Week, Dr. Nasimul Ahsan, Chief of Medicine Service and Acting Chief of Geriatric and Extended Care, cooked a Bengel (Bangladesh) meal of naan bread, dal (lentil) and kebab (turkey). Residents and their families agreed that the meal tasted wonderful! Here Adam Hayes, Asst Recreational Therapist) serving up plates to volunteers and CLC nurses who took them to the CLC residents **For more photos of the ceremony click [here](#).**



Hypoglycemia Safety Initiative

OGJVAMC Physician Co-Chair of Task Force

Have you heard about VA's new **Hypoglycemia Safety Initiative (HSI)**? Recently announced by Interim Under Secretary for Health Carolyn Clancy, MD, the HSI encourages shared decision making between Veterans with diabetes and their VA healthcare team to lower hypoglycemic risk.

Roughly 50 percent of Veterans with diabetes being treated with medications have related health issues (e.g., for ages greater than 75: kidney dysfunction, cognitive impairment) that increase their likelihood of developing serious hypoglycemia (low blood sugar); a condition which can lead to falls, emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

To help VA providers identify Veterans at risk and also team with patients to personalize their healthcare goals, the HSI includes a toolkit of evidence-based resources. Now available at the [Quality, Safety and Value Web site](#), the toolkit includes a simulation learning model which describes how to better understand and manage this important safety issue. Additionally, Communities of Practice have been created to spearhead meaningful interventions.

The HSI is the first in a series of initiatives underway by VHA's [Choosing Wisely](#) Task Force, co-chaired by Dr. Mark McConnell, OGVAMC Primary Care Physician. Choosing Wisely® is the national, collective effort by medical professional societies to reduce medical tests and treatments that may be harmful or of marginal value.

"HSI is a voluntary approach that VA sites may adopt to help identify patients at high risk of low blood sugar and see if they are interested in reducing medication in order to make their care more safe." said McConnell.

To learn more about HSI, visit [Choosing Wisely: Hypoglycemia \(Low Blood Sugar\)](#) or email mark.mcconnell@va.gov. ♦

Left: Mr. Entertainment, James Clement, entertaining our CLC residents at the kickoff social for National Salute to Veterans Week, celebrated February 8-14, 2015.

2014 Ethical Leadership Scores

The Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center ranked twelfth in the nation for Ethical Leadership scores on the most recent Integrated Ethics Survey, and its Integrated Ethics (IE) Program was recently recognized nationally as a role model for other VA facilities. *See cover story on page 1.*

Gold Foundation Award

Presented to the Compensation and Pension Service at the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center from the Office of Disability and Medical Assessment for Excellence in Quality and Performance. *See Service Spotlight on page 3.*

Oscars of the Month

December



Terry Kennemore, PT, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service. Terry is recognized for going above and beyond by shoveling snow at of her home health patients helping the elderly Veteran and his wife keep her medical appointment. They were extremely thankful and wrote to the Daily News praising her kindness.

January



Brenda Mason, Patient Administrative Service. Brenda is recognized for her reputation as the “Go-To” person in PAS. Although she is very busy, she always makes time to assist anyone who needs help. A recent example was her quick response in helping another service complete a VISN-level action item. In addition to her duties she covers the various sections of PAS when short staffed.

February



Aretina Rittenhouse, Prosthetic Service/Primary Care Service. Tina is recognized for going above and beyond in helping a Veteran experiencing mechanical problems with his electric wheelchair. On a daily basis Tina excels at her job; her knowledge of electric mobility equipment is exceptional and her expertise is sought by other staff.

Service Pins



December and January (left)

(l-r): **Greg Haslow** (Engineering Service, 10 years), **Arlene Mohr** (Patient Administrative Service, 10 years), **Carrie Champion** (Nursing & Patient Care Service, 30 years), **Jim Rice** (Director, 25 years), **Chris Grosskopf** (Engineering, 20 years), **Lisa Basanese** (Pharmacy Service, 20 years), **Patti Cazzola** (Chief of Staff Office, 30 years), and **Michael Halfmann** (Nutrition & Environmental Support Service, 20 years). Not Pictured: **Julia Ackley** (Nursing & Patient Care Service, 10 years), **Gloria Sauld** (Nursing & Patient Care Service, 10 years), **Daniel Klitzke** (Logistics Service, 25 years), **Jean Groeneveld** (Nursing & Patient Care Service, 10 years), **James Harrison** (Engineering Service, 10 years), and **Kim Fox** (Directors Office, 10 years).

February and March (right)

(l-r): **Eric Willman** (Engineering Service, 15 years), **James "Lou" Reynolds** (Behavioral Health Service, 10 years), **Donna LaDuron** (Nursing & Patient Care Service, 25 years), and **John Grayvold** (Logistics Service, 25 years). Not Pictured: **Darlene Doran, LPN** (Menominee CBOC, 10 years), **Jeannie Reid** (Sault Ste. Marie CBOC, 15 years), **Eric Clawson** (VA Police Service, 15 years), **Norm Miilu** (Nutritional Environmental Support Service, 25 years), and **Lori Aderman, RN** (Nursing & Patient Care Service, 35 years).



Mentor Certification



Brad Nelson (Public Affairs Officer) and **Steve Treiber** (Supervisor, Biomedical Engineering Section) were recognized for achieving VHA mentor certification at the Resident level. They completed VHA Core Mentor Training and actively participated in 25 hours of mentoring, coaching or precepting. Certified Resident Mentors, Coaches and/or Preceptors play a key role in VHA's succession planning efforts.

Welcome To OGVAMC!

Behavioral Health

Deanna Brown, LMSW
Dorothy Carr, RN
Louis Gignac

Chaplain Service

Tracy Blagec

Imaging Service

Shelley Pizzi

Nursing & Patient Care

Sage Berninger, LPN
Britnee Gillett, LPN
(Sault Ste Marie CBOC)
Gale Knight, LPN
(Marquette CBOC)
Alexis Zambon, RN

Nutrition & Environmental Support

Morris Conery

Pathology & Lab

Robert Cvengros
Alyssa Erickson

Patient Admin Service

Penny Dober

Pharmacy Service

Jessica Cameron, PharmD

Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service

Shawn Zimmerlee, PTA

Primary Care

Diana Hardy, PA-C
(Manistique ROC)
Terry Hayrynen-Rauch, DO
(Marquette CBOC)
Thomas Knutson, MD
(Menominee CBOC)
Arthur Naddell, MD
Aretina Rittenhouse
Prosthetics Service
Marybeth Langin
Lenore Strong
Surgical Service
Daniel Cecconi, MD

Farewell Wishes! (*retired)

Behavioral Health

Peg Baciak*

Nutrition & Environmental Support

Marjorie Corozolla*
Jack Strong

Nursing & Patient Care

Sherry Aichner, RN
James Carne, LPN
Akemi Joyce, RN
Geraldyn Patterson, RN*
April Schutte, RN

OIT

Timothy Hoiby

Primary Care Service

Nicholas Cannella, MD
Kathryn Tansey, NP*
(Sault Ste Marie CBOC)

Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service

Christine Harris, OT

Surgery

Barry Bast, MD
Bobbie Domaradzki

Veteran Canteen Service

Edna Price

Upcoming Events & Observances

April:

- * Alcohol Awareness Month
- * National Occupational Therapy Month
- * Stress Awareness Month
- * Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- 5 Easter Sunday
Passover Begins at Sundown
- 6 U.S. enters WWI (1917)
- 7 **Veteran Assistance Fair,**
Marquette Armory, Marquette, MI
- 12-18 National Volunteer Week
- 19 Battle of Lexington & Concord (1775)
- 19-25 Administrative Professionals Week
- 24 **Administrative Professionals Day**
- TBD **Veteran Town Hall, Manistique, MI**
- 27-May 1 National Compliance and

May:

- 3-9 Public Service Recognition Week
- 6-12 National Nurses Week
- 7 National Day of Prayer
Vietnam War officially ends (1975)
- 8 V-E Day (1945); 70th Anniversary
- 10 Mother's Day
- 10-16 National Nursing Home Week
National Women's Health Week
- 11-17 National Hospital Week
National Police Week
- 14 Women's Army Auxiliary Corp
Established (1942)
- 16 Armed Forces Day
- 20 National Employee Health & Fitness Day
VA2K Walk
- 25 **Memorial Day**



Visit us online at www.ironmountain.va.gov
and follow us on Facebook & Twitter
Comments? [Email bradley.nelson@va.gov](mailto:Email%20bradley.nelson@va.gov)